	<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Committee 16 October 2023</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People</p>
	<p align="center">Lead Cabinet Member: Cllr Gwen Grah</p>
<p align="center">Annual Report: Participation and Engagement with Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2022/23</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Summary of Activity for Care in Action Groups
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of participation activity for care experienced children and young people in 2022/23. Participation activity includes Care in Action (CIA) groups which comprises Brent's Children in Care Council. The work of CIA groups is complimented by participation work undertaken by Barnardo's led Brent Care Journeys (BCJ) and through the Hub for Care Leavers. Through these activities, care experienced children and young people's voices contribute to the development of services. This report provides an overview of participation activity and demonstrates how feedback from care experienced young people informs practice and service development.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the contents of this report. It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Committee endorse the development areas for 2023/24 outlined in section 4.11 of this report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

3.1.1 Participation and engagement with looked after children and care leavers contributes to the following Borough Plan 2023-27 strategic priorities:

- **Prosperity and Stability in Brent**
- **Thriving Communities**
- **The Best Start in Life**

Participation and engagement work with children and young people provides opportunities for them to gain confidence and skills for their future careers. This work also allows the Council to understand the live experience of those with care experience and support them to thrive in the future. One outcome of the strategic priority of children having the best start in life is that there are more opportunities for young people to participate in decisions. This includes more engagement with young people from a range of different communities. This report outlines how care experienced children and young people have been able to shape services that impact on their lives through participation and engagement activities.

4.0 Background

4.1.1 In Brent there are three Children in Care Council groups: Junior Care in Action (JCIA) (7 to 11-year-olds) meeting in school holidays, Care in Action (12 to 17-year-olds) and Care Leavers in Action (CLIA) (18 to 25-year-olds) which both meet monthly. Sessions are organised by participation workers with the support of group members who identify areas of work that are important to them. The sessions provide a mixture of activities that allow members to:

- voice their views and experiences of care
- participate in focused opportunities that involve them in the development of the services that they receive
- have opportunities to gain skills that will support their ability to participate, feedback and make suggestions
- have time and space to meet with peers for support, social interaction, and the sharing of experiences
- find out about local, London and national projects/events.

4.1.2 A summary of activity for Care in Action groups is available in Appendix 1.

4.2 Care in Action summary of achievements

4.2.1 Key achievements in 2022/23 include:

4.2.2 Young people becoming increasingly confident in taking part in interviewing and staff appointments:

- In April 2022 a cohort of 10 young people attended 'youth interview' panel training. This was co-facilitated by a trained participation worker and a senior representative of CLIA who has taken part in several interview panels
- Young person interview panels were a feature for all senior appointments including for the Chief Executive, Corporate Director, 2x CYP Directors as well as the Head of Service for LAC and Permanency
- Young people also took part in several other interview panels including for Personal Advisors, Participation Officers and the Participation Manager.

4.2.3 Celebrating care experienced young people's achievements:

- Representatives of CIA and CLIA took a lead role in planning and organising the Pride of Brent Youth Awards. Members of CIA were on the young person panel. In addition, the achievements of both CIA members and wider care experienced young people were recognised and celebrated. A CLIA member was the recipient of the Leader's Award and another member of CIA was the recipient of the Positive Role Model Award.
- The 2022 staff conference showcased the multimedia production from care experienced young people working that had been developed in conjunction with the KILN theatre and BCJ. This meant that over 400 staff had the opportunity to view the amazing work and messages from Brent care experienced young people.

4.2.4 Care experienced young people continued to influence service delivery and shape the local offer through commissioning:

- The Voice and Influence Subgroup of the Local Partnership Meeting for LAC and Care Leavers has continued and further developed with an agreed terms of reference and BCJ being an active member. The subgroup helps to connect participation activities across CYP with membership also including the Virtual School, Fostering, LAC and Permanency teams alongside the participation workers. It has consistent attendance by members of CIA and CLIA members to develop new initiatives.
- CIA worked with BCJ to develop a codesigned prototype to enable system change. Young people said that they wanted to spend more time developing relationships with their social workers. As a result, an activity budget was piloted where every 6 months Social Workers are able to access funding to do an activity with the young person.
- A campaign focus in 2022/23 was improving relationships with carers, this was in direct response to findings from our last Bright Spots survey

results in early 2021. A “Do’s and Don’ts” poster for foster carers was developed has been incorporated into foster carer training.

- CLIA members were trained to take part in the tendering process. These commissioning projects were:

Mental health and wellbeing project

In September 2022 young people from CLIA were initially involved in the original panel for Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing tender; subsequently extra funding was secured enabling the project to widen its initial scope and CLIA members again took an active role by evaluating the tenders returned for the Targeted Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing provision. Their feedback influenced the final decision for the award of the contract to the preferred provider.

Hospital Discharge Project

Young people from CIA and CLIA were involved in the evaluation of tender applications relating to a test and learn project originally funded from the Integrated Care System (ICS) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Provider Collaborative, Central North West London (CNWL) and West London (WL) health trusts. The aim of the project is to identify the most appropriate means of supporting discharges of children and young people from emergency departments and acute hospital settings, within the most appropriate and expedient timescale. The target group for the service are young people who have presented with a mental health crisis including suicidal ideation, but who are assessed to have not met the criteria for a Tier 4 setting and therefore are deemed medically fit for discharge.

4.2.5 The 2022/23 year provided several opportunities for Junior CIA, CIA and CLIA to come together and gain new experiences whilst also having the opportunity to share their views and influence services.

- Both CLIA and CIA were offered the opportunity to attend a residential experience. The Gordon Brown Centre is an outdoor centre, run by Brent Council, that offers a range of outdoor learning opportunities for children and young people. In 2022/23 the participation team ran two residential trips to Gordon Brown Centre, one in the summer holiday and one in the October half term. Both attracted new members that the team have worked with to continue engaging.
- There were also varied and regular half term, Easter and summer activities for JCIA, for example a trip to indoor bouncy castle venue called Inflatation.

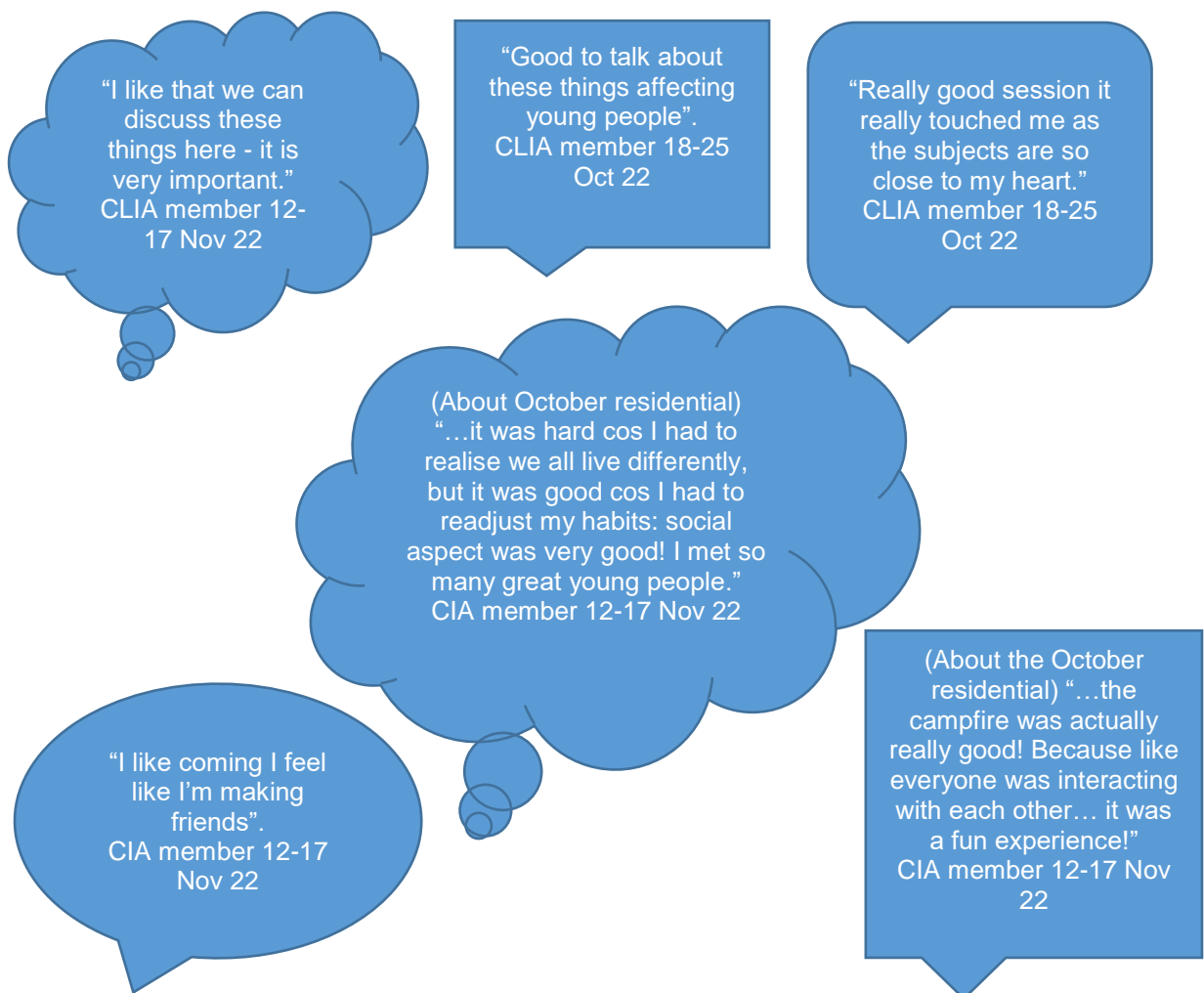
Other events for the wider care experienced group included:

- C(L)IA hosted a summer fun day that was attended by over 50 children, foster carers and care leavers.

- In December 2022 the Participation Team applied to London Zoo community engagement initiative and were able to secure discounted tickets. A day trip was organised for Care Experienced children and young people and foster carers and their families; over 60 people attended.

4.3 What children and young people in Care in Action groups have told us has gone well?

4.3.1 Children and young people who regularly attend CIA, CLIA or BCJ report that they enjoy and value the groups for a wide variety of reasons. These include having an opportunity to meet other care experienced young people and make new friends in a safe space; being provided the opportunity to influence the way services are delivered for the wider care experienced population; and being afforded the opportunity to see how decisions are made. This year the impact of participation activities has been evidenced by the increased use of co-production and co-design evidence by initiatives such as tools for life story work and developing of resources for foster carers. This will continue to be a focus and the impact of these codesigned resources will be reviewed going forward, including by seeking more in-depth feedback from care experienced young people and from groups utilising the materials developed.



4.3.2 There continues to be a core group of children and young people in each of the Care in Action groups. They are actively involved in thinking of ways to recruit more children and young people into the groups. The groups are directly promoted to children and young people through foster carers, social workers, personal advisors, the Virtual School and Independent Reviewing Officers.

4.3.4 Brent Care Journeys and joint working

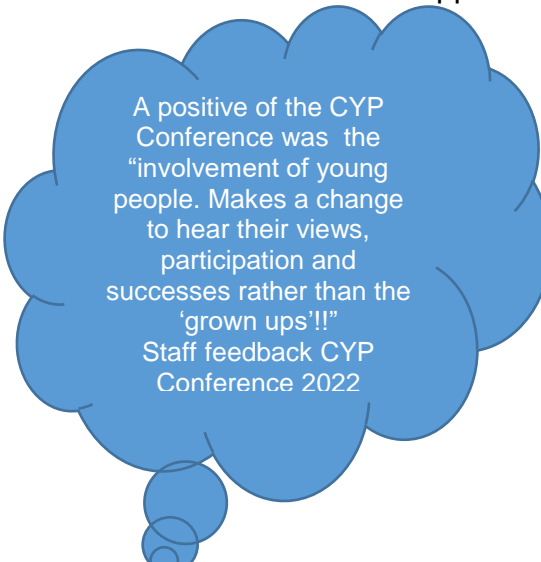
4.3.5 Brent Care Journeys (BCJ) a five-year partnership between Brent Council and Barnardo's. It is one of Barnardo's Core Priority Programmes as part of their 10-year strategy focusing on outcomes for care experienced young people and will continue until 2025. BCJ has continued to deliver a wide range of activities, from one-off events, to training, and ongoing workshops.

4.3.6 In preparation for the end of Barnardo's 5-year partnership in March 2025 CIA and CLIA have this year begun to work more closely with BCJ completing joint initiatives and sharing expertise. The Children's Services Manager for Brent Care Journeys now attends the monthly Voice and Influence sub-group of the Local Partnership Meeting providing the opportunity for BCJ and CIA to pull together to develop a unified Brent participation offer and develop shared priorities and opportunities for joint working.

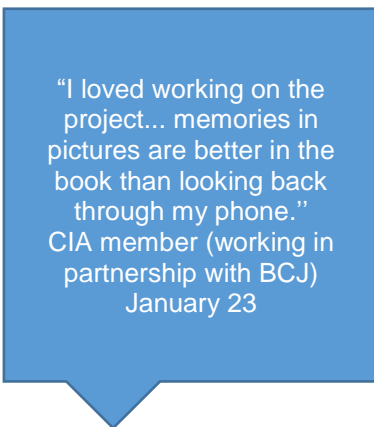
4.3.7 In one instance a CIA member worked with BCJ to develop a codesigned prototype to develop memory boxes for care experienced young people. They then presented the concept to CIA encouraging other members to become more involved in the next stages of the codesign process.

4.3.8 Young people that were members of both BCJ and CLIA took part in a theatre production at the Kiln Theatre which involved 3 films, movement, soundscape, monologue, poetry and set design. The participation team then worked with BCJ and the wider production to ensure that the production was showcased at the 2022 staff conference, with a live performance, videos and multimedia presentation all available to all CYP staff. Staff feedback was overwhelmingly positive and reported how they valued the opportunity to see the production which highlighted young people's experience of being in care.

4.3.9 The Ofsted ILACS report (Feb 2023) states children and young people "are actively involved in initiatives and innovative projects that help to improve and strengthen services and support. Co-design with children and care leavers is at the heart of the approach to children's services improvements".



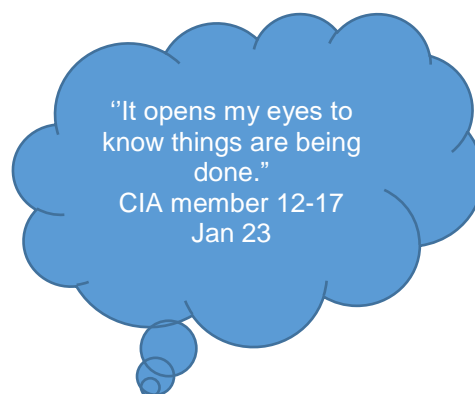
A positive of the CYP Conference was the "involvement of young people. Makes a change to hear their views, participation and successes rather than the 'grown ups'!!"
Staff feedback CYP Conference 2022



"I loved working on the project... memories in pictures are better in the book than looking back through my phone."
CIA member (working in partnership with BCJ)
January 23



"The videos and performance were very moving and inspiring. It was great to hear the voice of young people and colleagues alike. There was a sense of positivity with determination for continuous improvement."
Staff feedback CYP Conference 2022

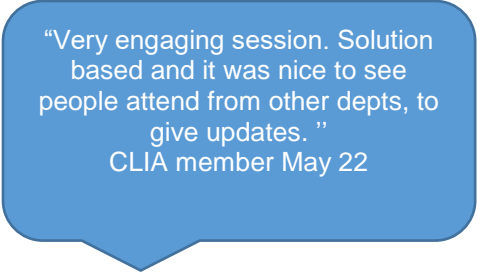


4.4 What children and young people said needs to improve

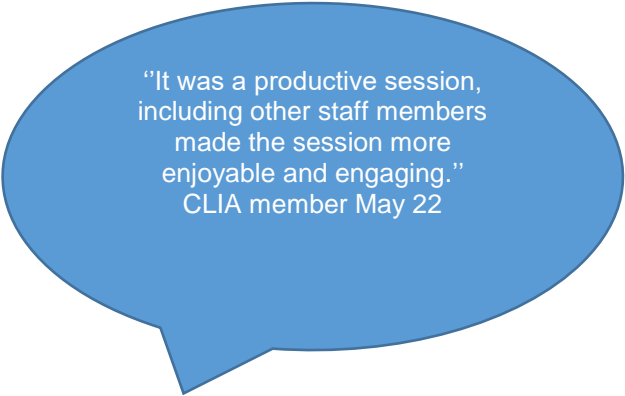
- 4.4.1 Young people have continued to express frustration with the number of staff changes across the professional network that supports them, particularly in relation to social work changes, which was evidenced by Ofsted commenting in the ILACS report (February 2023) that “...not all children in care benefit from stability in their relationships with workers, due to staff changes.” Ofsted also acknowledged that “...services for children in care and care leavers have declined from outstanding to good, due to reduced oversight in some areas of social work practice and challenges in recruitment and retention of staff.”
- 4.4.2 Young people want to be told in a timely way when social workers are leaving and to be provided the contact details of their new social worker at the earliest opportunity so that they can have organised introductions, handovers and goodbyes. Unfortunately, this was identified last year and remains an issue.
- 4.4.3 Young people continue to worry about the cost-of-living crisis and how it disproportionately impacts upon care experienced young people. Some young people have requested that “care as a protected characteristic” become a focus of work in 2022-23 and further consultation is planned in 2023-24.

4.5 Engagement with Senior Leaders and Members

- 4.5.1 Having met with young people from CIA, CLIA and BCJ, the Ofsted ILACS (Feb 2023) report states that “Members of the council and senior leaders are listening, committed and caring corporate parents. Members of the vibrant child in care and care leavers’ councils, called ‘Care in Action’ and ‘Care Leavers in Action’, attend the corporate parenting board and are actively involved in initiatives and innovative projects that help to improve and strengthen services and support. Co-design with children and care leavers is at the heart of the approach to children’s services improvement. Managers are working on plans to increase participation activity and the numbers of children and care leavers who attend these groups.”
- 4.5.2 Sessions and events have continued to be attended by senior leaders including the Corporate Director, Directors, Head of Service for both LAC and Permanency and SQA and the Principal Social Worker.

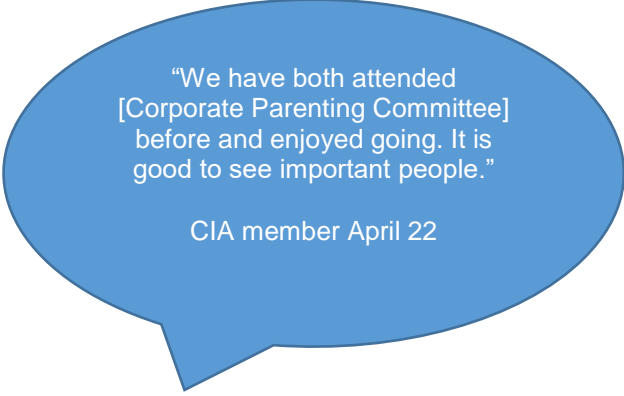


“Very engaging session. Solution based and it was nice to see people attend from other depts, to give updates.”
CLIA member May 22



“It was a productive session, including other staff members made the session more enjoyable and engaging.”
CLIA member May 22

- 4.5.3 Young people have continued to regularly attend and contribute to Corporate Parenting Committee, new young people were supported to attend for the first time in 2022, before each committee young people are prepared with a briefing session in which they develop messaging to senior leaders.



“We have both attended [Corporate Parenting Committee] before and enjoyed going. It is good to see important people.”

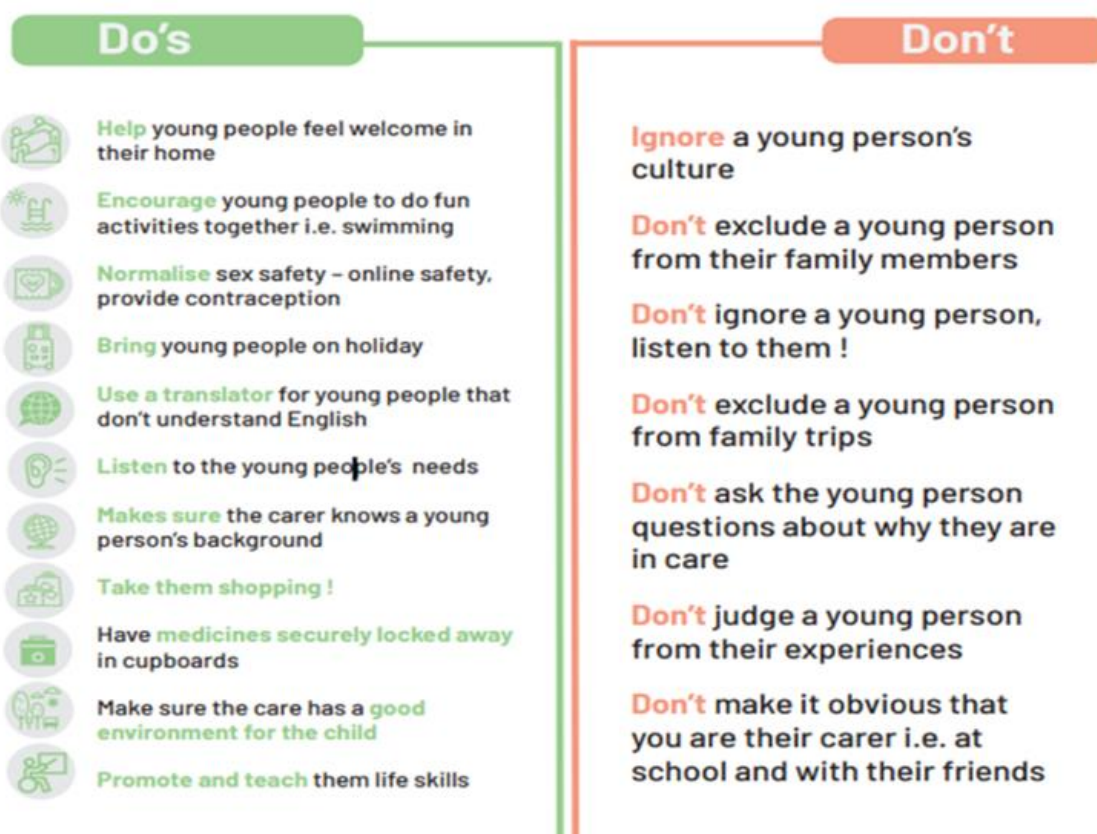
CIA member April 22

- 4.5.4 Representatives of CIA/CLIA have also attended the Local Partnership Meeting for LAC and Care Leavers and are members of the Voice and Influence subgroup of this meeting. The Local Partnership Meeting is a multi-agency meeting of partners working together to improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people. Participants include representatives from CCG, CAMHS, Central North West London NHS trust, Anna Freud Centre, Probation, various providers as well as Brent staff from Housing, YOS, Brent Virtual School, Localities, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance and Looked after Children and Permanency service.

4.6 Focus area: Bright Spots Survey Findings

- 4.6.1 The Bright Spots survey is a service improvement tool, designed by CoramVoice, the University of Oxford, and care experienced young people, that supports local authorities to systematically listen to their children in care and care leavers, about the things that are important to them. The survey was carried out in for children in care in 2021 and care leavers in 2022 with findings reported in the 2021/22 annual report.
- 4.6.2 In 2022/23 CIA groups continued to focus on developing campaigns based on the findings from this survey. For example, one finding was the need to improve relationships with carers when children first enter care. Consequently, our

children and young people developed a “Do’s and Don’ts” poster for foster carers which is being incorporated into foster carer training.



4.6.7 A campaign focus for Care Leavers in action was responding to 19% of care leavers who answered the Bright Spots Survey in 2021/22 did not feel that they have a trusted person who stuck by them.

4.6.8 Care Leavers in Action have developed the below piece of work is intended for use by all Trusted Adults including social workers, foster carers, IROs, independent visitors and PAs. The aim is to improve understanding of what it

takes to build a trusting relationship between an adult involved in the care of a young person. The leaflet also has QR code embedded to capture feedback.

THINK ABOUT OUR JOURNEY

Let's talk about trust from a care experienced perspective!

If you are trying to build a relationship with a young person, you need to think about how hard it may be for us to trust you

Having someone you trust is really important but some young people don't have anyone that they trust. In the last Bright Spots survey, nearly one in five (19%) of the young people reported not having someone they trusted and who stuck by them

BUILDING SAFE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Safe, stable relationships help young people build attachment, develop self-confidence and esteem, resilience, in addition to helping them build trust in adults again. They can learn positive relational experiences as opposed to previous negative experiences and trauma. By building a strong connection with someone you could also create a much-needed sense of belonging and identity.



CARE LEAVERS IN ACTION'S TOP TIPS ON HOW TO BUILD A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP:



- "Show up to big things like graduations, performances, award ceremonies".
- Honesty
Empathetic
Consistency
Authenticity
"Say it how it is!"
- "Consistency, continuity- keep things the same or give reasonable notice for changes"
- "My last PA kept it real with me"
- Telling them different channels they can go to... and groups they can join to have their voices heard such as care leavers in action...with it not overlapping with external organisations such as Barnardos and children's care in council should be statutory for all local authorities
- "Motivating a young person to achieve to the best of their ability. They believe on being a long life champion and aim to be happy in life."
- "Getting to know the young person outside of care, like attending care leavers stuff, keen interests and willing to try new things"
- "Participation staff caring about how we get home and if we arrived safely"
- Knows how to listen
Not misbehaving
Honesty
SMART Targets
Advocate
- "Motivating the younger generation to go and succeed in life and make a name for themselves".
"Being there for someone who is going through something and not judging them"

"TO BE TRUSTED IS A GREATER COMPLIMENT THAN BEING LOVED"

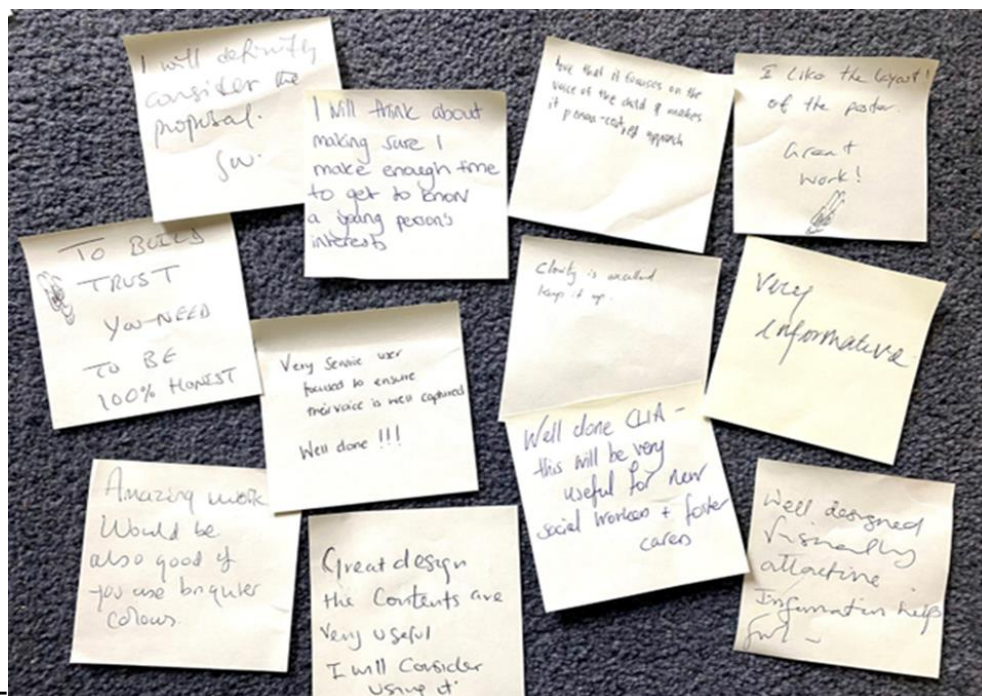
"LEARNING TO TRUST IS ONE OF LIFE'S MOST DIFFICULT TASKS"

TRUST IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF HUMAN MOTIVATION."

Please use this QR code to feed back to Care Leavers in Action on this leaflet







4.7 The Care Leavers' Hub

- 4.7.1 The Care Leavers' Hub activity scheme was developed in November 2018 and provides care leavers space to social with other care leavers and combat isolation.
- 4.7.2 Hub activities are usually held in the last week of each month to encourage good attendance. The activity is to offer care leavers who are identified by their personal advisors as being affected by isolation. Some of these young people do not have families, support or trusted friends. The young people who attend the activities are supported by some older care leavers to combat that feeling of isolation and sometimes shyness. The sessions are usually vibrant with a variety of conversations taking place. It also enhances maturity and confidence in our young people.
- 4.7.3 Over the last twelve months, care leavers continued to meet at their chosen venue and engaged with activities such as bowling and mini golf. Those that attend the Hub are aged between 18-25 years and during the sessions the older young people support the younger ones often talking about independent living skills and managing a tenancy.
- 4.7.4 The Hub group continue to discuss the challenges of life and world events such as the King's coronation to which some of our care leavers were for and others against the celebration. Other topics discussed include the feelings about how Covid was handled and the behaviour of some government politicians.
- 4.7.5 The Hub hosted another well attended Christmas dinner that was organised by staff with the help of the manager of the Learning Zone. They were offered the opportunity to do a stadium tour before dinner and said they enjoyed the experience. One of the young people who is studying music at university volunteered to be the DJ for the night.

4.8 Local events, opportunities and initiatives that are promoted with care experienced young people

- 4.8.1 Through a Participation and Enrichment group on Microsoft Teams, participation and enrichment activities are regularly shared with social workers and personal advisors so that they can bring them to the attention of children, young people and carers. Some areas that have been promoted in the last year include:
- a) Brent Youth Parliament – a youth led group that supports young people in Brent to express their views, have a say in decisions that affect them and learn new skills.
 - b) Pride of Brent Youth Awards – recognising and celebrating the outstanding achievements of Brent's brilliant young people.
 - c) Local offer consultation - Consultation workshop delivered by LCT in conjunction with BCJ in 2022 with regards local offer.

- d) Apprenticeships - The local authority provides for appropriate tailored individual support, including 10 ring-fenced apprenticeships for care leavers, a traineeship programme, various workshops around vocational training and development opportunities.
- e) Prospects - Prospects is a service within the Connexions organization supporting NEET young people in finding suitable opportunities. We work closely with Prospects, meeting every month with a focus on our 19 to 21-year-old care leavers. Referrals can be made independently or via the monthly meeting and the Prospects team support our care leavers into education, training, and employment.
- f) ASDAN Independent Skills Programme or the Gordon Brown Practical Skills weekend - Young people are supported to complete either the ASDAN Independent Skills Programme or the Gordon Brown Practical Skills Weekend along with the My Bank Money Programme before being referred for their own accommodation.
- g) Grandmentors scheme - The Grandmentors programme aims to transform the lives of young people through the emotional and practical support of older volunteers. The trained volunteers aged 50 and over, forge trusting and positive relationships that support, challenge and empower mentees to unlock their own skills and to shape their own future.

4.9 London and national events

- 4.9.1 Children in Care Council Partnership – a representative from each London borough attends this network to discuss issues that care experienced children and young people face. The group also carries out research, campaigning and projects.

4.10 Keeping up to date with best practice: London Participation Network meeting

- 4.10.1 The Acting Participation and Engagement Lead has continued to attend London wide meetings for participation officers. The meetings are a support network, where officers share what is happening in their borough. These meetings have proven to be invaluable as a forum for learning about best practice. The meetings are very solution focused.

4.11 Development Areas for 2023/24

- 4.11.1 Participation Team Staffing: The Participation team underwent a restructure in 2022-23. The aim of which has been to provide increased capacity and resilience within the service through a team-based approach. The agreed realignment builds additional capacity having created a part time team manager role allowing greater day to day focus on developing participation in Brent. The aim is to establish a pool of workers that can be utilised to cover especially busy periods including the summer holidays and residential activities. Critically, the

creation of a bank of participation support workers, paid on an hourly basis will facilitate the opportunity to casually employ care experienced young people to support C(L)IA events.

4.11.2 Recruitment has been challenging, an interim manager was appointed in February with significant participatory experience, and she was keen to apply to the role full-time. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen personal circumstances she has had to move abroad so is no longer available. However, in the 5 months that she was in post it was apparent that the model worked and provided the necessary oversight and expertise to continue to drive innovative participation. Currently, the team is staffed by 2 participation workers with permanent roles being advertised with the aim for a full team of permanent staff in 2023-24.

4.11.3 In 2023-24 there needs to be increased focus on the following areas:

- Further development work to achieve a unified approach with Brent Care Journeys to ensure that the work Barnardo's started continues at the end of our 5-year partnership in March 2025.
- Continue to explore ways to increase attendance and participation at all CIA groups.
- A new Bright Spots survey will be relaunched in October/November 2023 to gain feedback from care experience children and young people. The results will be used to improve services.
- Work with CIA and CLIA to further explore their views of care experience as a protected characteristic. If so, to develop consultation with wider audience of care experienced children and young people.
- Work with wider service to increase children and young people's attendance and involvement in LAC reviews and care planning.
- Widen the participation offer beyond care experience young people to ensure that the voice of all children we work with is sought and their views and opinions are used to influence service design.

5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

5.1 This report demonstrates that the voices of care experienced young people are critical to the development of services that impact upon them.

6.0 Financial Considerations

6.2 There are no financial considerations arising from this report.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have their views considered and taken seriously. Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 protect participation of young people by law.

8.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

8.1 There are no Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) considerations arising from this report.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

9.1 There are no climate change and environmental considerations arising from this report.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 There are no communication considerations arising from this report.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children and Young People